



Assateague Coastal Trust – PO Box 731, Berlin, MD 21811 – 410-629-1538

House Economic Matters Committee
Testimony On SB616
Senate Finance Committee
March 15, 2022

Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my support of SB616 with amendments to also remove every other energy source that emits greenhouse gasses from the RPS. We strongly support removing trash incineration from the Renewable Portfolio Standard: it is not sustainable or renewable; harms the health of nearby communities through its emissions of carcinogens and neurotoxins; and pollutes more greenhouse gasses per unit of energy than coal, the dirtiest of fossil fuels. We encourage you to amend SB616 to also remove other sources of energy that emit greenhouse gasses from the Renewable Portfolio Standard.

To face the climate crisis, especially in light of this month's IPCC report that says that our current mitigation efforts are not enough to stave off climate disasters, we must ensure that our subsidies for renewable energy through the Renewable Portfolio Standard are going toward actual renewable energy. We cannot afford to be spending our renewable energy money on facilities that emit greenhouse gasses - now is the time to double down Maryland's commitment to truly renewable energy and subsidize only facilities that are emissions-free.

Trash incineration should never have been included in Tier 1 of the RPS. Maryland's trash incinerators pollute more than Maryland's coal plants per unit of energy each produces, and emit significant quantities of greenhouse gasses and local harmful air pollution: much of their energy comes from burning plastic, a fossil fuel. In the original design of the RPS program, incinerators were included in the Tier 2 category that was to phase out in 2019, but in 2011 as community pressure was mounting against two new proposed incinerators in Baltimore and Frederick, the industry got itself added to Tier 1. Ultimately, the community opposition won, and neither facility was built, but \$36 million in RPS subsidies is still wasted on incineration each year.

Burning other types of waste, from chicken litter to wood products, and manufacturing methane all pollute the environment, harm nearby communities' health, and contribute to climate change: a bad investment of public dollars that every Maryland utility ratepayer contributes to. Every Renewable Energy Credit that goes toward a facility that emits greenhouse gasses is a Renewable Energy Credit taken away from a facility that does not: an egregious waste of public money.

In the anaerobic digestion of factory farm waste, animal waste and other materials are fed into a digester where it is broken down by specialized methane-producing microorganisms that can only thrive in the absence of oxygen. Chicken waste is a dry solid and doesn't normally emit significant amounts of methane outside of the conditions of a digester. Here are a few points that big industry will not tell you about digestors:

- No matter the source, burning methane produces CO₂. Furthermore, it is an even more potent greenhouse gas in and of itself when it leaks into the atmosphere - a huge and undercounted problem.
- Sending animal waste to a digester creates methane but does nothing to mitigate the significant air quality issues associated with factory farms. Additionally, the anaerobic digestion process leaves behind a digestate that must still be land applied. This digestate is phosphorus rich- a nutrient that is already saturated in our farm fields.
- The production of methane from organic matter through anaerobic digestion has been used as an excuse for expanding and entrenching dangerous LNG infrastructure.
- Taxpayers will be responsible for damages on the roads and highways from increased truck use not to mention hauling manure in excess amounts.
- Having subsidies for manure to energy facilities only creates incentives for more CAFO's on the Eastern Shore, polluting our air and waters that are already greatly impacted. Digestors have to be continuously fed in order to return a profit- Eastern shore residents do not want to see anymore factory sized CAFOs being built.

Because of the inclusion of these polluters in the Renewable Portfolio Standard, Maryland ratepayers paid over \$30 million to buy Renewable Energy Credits from facilities that emit greenhouse gasses in 2020, and over \$246 million since 2008. The Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility estimates that if nothing changes, those costs will mount to half a billion dollars subsidizing polluters by 2030. Please support SB616 *with amendments* expanding it to cover all polluters in the RPS, so that those dollars can go toward supporting wind, solar, hydro, and geothermal power - not greenhouse gas emissions.

For all of these reasons and many more, please support SB616 with amendments and end "renewable energy" subsidies for all greenhouse gas emitting energy sources in Maryland. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gabrielle Ross". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gabrielle Ross, Assateague Coastkeeper
Assateague Coastal Trust